

**UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE FOR  
ARMS CONTROL AND INTERNATIONAL SECURITY  
WASHINGTON**

July 5, 2011

**MEMORANDUM FOR THE CHAIRMAN, INTERNATIONAL  
SECURITY ADVISORY BOARD (ISAB)**

**SUBJECT: Terms of Reference – ISAB Study on Strategic Deterrence and the  
Path to a World of Mutual Assured Stability**

The International Security Advisory Board (ISAB) is requested to undertake a study of how the United States could manage a transition to a world of mutual assured stability.

In a world characterized by mutual assured stability, increasingly interdependent states would have incentives to cooperate on political, military, and economic issues, reducing the need for adversarial approaches to managing security challenges. Such an international security environment would facilitate significant reductions in nuclear weapons and a corresponding relaxation of nuclear force postures – in effect moving beyond traditional concepts of deterrence. This transition would be gradual unfolding across a continuum from today's deterrence-based stability to a world less reliant on nuclear weapons and characterized by increased trust and transparency among major powers. Options for the sequencing and implementation of this transition constitute the core of this study.

As the United States and Russia continue to draw down the number of their nuclear weapons, maintaining an effective and credible strategic deterrent will remain an important objective for U.S. policy. The early stages of a transition to mutual assured stability, facilitated by continued reductions in nuclear weapons, would include reliance on traditional forms of deterrence in order to dissuade potential rivals from attempting nuclear buildups. However, achieving the goal of a world without nuclear weapons would require a transition away from these traditional concepts of nuclear deterrence and assurance.

It would be of great assistance if the ISAB could examine and assess:

- The possible components of mutual assured stability and what the U.S. would need to see happening to have the confidence to consider very low numbers and, eventually, agree to the elimination of nuclear weapons;
- The development of incentives to refrain from precipitous actions and pursue cooperative and non-military solutions to international problems, even in periods of tension;
- Strategies for how the United States could manage the transition away from strategic deterrence to mutual assured stability, which would be accompanied by reductions to very low numbers of nuclear weapons, and ultimately the complete elimination of nuclear weapons;
- Whether there is tension between maintaining an effective deterrent, the requirements of assurance, and further reductions of nuclear weapons;
- What stabilizing factors, if any, might replace classical deterrence in a world of mutual assured stability; and
- Possible near term U.S. policy, force structure, and posture initiatives that would maintain strategic stability, support deterrence, and improve the long term prospects for mutual assured stability.

During its conduct of the study, the ISAB, as it deems necessary, may expand upon the tasks listed above. I request that you complete the study in 240 days. Completed work should be submitted to the ISAB Executive Directorate no later than March 16, 2012.

The Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security will sponsor the study. The Assistant Secretary of State for Arms Control, Verification and Compliance will support the study. Michael Urena will serve as the Executive Secretary for the study and Chris Herrick will represent the ISAB Executive Directorate.

The study will be conducted in accordance with the provisions of P.L. 92-463, the "Federal Advisory Committee Act." If the ISAB establishes a working group to assist in its study, the working group must present its report or findings to the full ISAB for consideration in a formal meeting, prior to presenting the report or findings to the Department.



Ellen O. Tauscher